

Address to the Graduates of the 90th Correction Academy

Friday, March 27, 2009

First let me say “well done” to you, the graduates of the 90th Corrections Academy. Welcome to the families and friends of our graduates. And thank you to all members of the DOC community who have come to share this day of accomplishment.

Several times each year we come together to celebrate a new group of people who are joining the DOC community by graduating from the NH Corrections Academy.

For those of us who have been with DOC for years, some of us for a great many years, we look upon you as the life blood of the department. New employees bring with them a range of backgrounds, cultures, experiences and talents that ensure that the Department of Corrections will continue to develop and improve its ability to meet our mission. You bring with you the enthusiasm that comes with embarking on a new journey. You embody all our hopes for the future.

Hope. Hope is a quintessential quality of mankind. It is one of those traits that set us apart for we are able to conjure up images of a future as we would like it to be. Hope motivates us then to work toward that future in the belief that we can make it happen.

Woodrow Wilson, our 28th President in the time of World War I said; *“You are not here merely to make a living. You are here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, and with finer spirit of hope and achievement. You are here to enrich the world. You impoverish yourself if you forget this errand.”* I believe this was part of a speech given to the delegates to the League of Nations (the precursor to the United Nations).

What do such lofty words have to do with today? I believe they have everything to do with today. In choosing corrections as your career you have entered one of the most hopeful occupations I know of. *“You are*

here to enable the world to live more amply, with greater vision, and with finer spirit of hope and achievement.”

Corrections is founded in the belief that every person has the ability to change and make a better life for themselves.

Corrections is based on the understanding that, by the example we set, by the way we treat other people and in the actions we take every day as we carry out our duties, each of us can have a positive influence over those around us. Inmates, parolees, probationers, colleagues, the public, and our families and loved ones, they all can profit from our example and prosper in our presence.

If that doesn't describe a hopeful profession I don't know what would.

So, how can I choose hope as my theme when DOC and the State of New Hampshire are facing unprecedented financial challenges?

Henry Fielding, an English novelist made the profound observation that *“adversity is a trial of principle.”* *“Adversity is a trial of principle.”* And the honoring of solid principles is as basic to our profession as is the belief in human potential.

This state and this department are destined for adversity over the next few years. It is an unavoidable fact that DOC will be experiencing layoffs. Some of you, some of us in this auditorium will bear this adversity more heavily than others. The weight of the financial crisis will be felt more personally in some lives than in others. Know that we will strive to recall employees as quickly as is humanly possible.

To those of you who feel the harsh bite of a reduction in the department's workforce I ask you to not abandon your hope for your future. We have invested time, money and hope in your training. You have invested your time, effort and will to succeed at your training. Neither of us can afford to waste all that. I also ask that you not abandon your principles. Hard times and ill fortune should not be

allowed to strip from you the worth and potential that the department recognizes in you and that you affirm in yourself. You will remain a vital part of DOC's hope for the future.

To those of you who are fortunate enough to take on your new career in the Department of Corrections unabated I have similar requests of you. These are times that can easily breed cynicism, negativity and anger. We will see friends depart and feel the pain of loss. Worse, these emotions can prove to be dangerous distractions from the demanding and challenging work we do. When hard times threaten our personal and collective hopes these reactions are understandable. But, they have no place in our workplace.

“Adversity is a trial of principle.” Throughout DOC people will be asked to take on an extra load. To do more with less (as some politicians often say).

It will only be through a unity of purpose, and abiding belief in the promise of our work and the harnessing of our collective energy and will that we will be able to deliver on our mission.

The citizens of this great state, our families and our colleagues expect no less of us.

At this time in the ceremony we always turn to the families and loved ones of those who are graduating. Even in the best of times, the stresses of our work place demands on you. Demands for understanding and support. Now, more than ever, your role is crucial.

I ask that we all emerge from this ceremony committed to upholding the mission of the department, dedicated to maintaining our strength of character and pledged to the task of keeping the DOC community united until we are once again able to be whole.

Go with God's speed. Be hopeful. And be safe.